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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - U.S. ECONOMIC MEASURES,  
ISRAELI ELECTIONS, AND IRAN

11. LEAD STORIES: Front-page stories on Thursday morning included press remarks on Wednesday by South Korean Foreign and Trade Minister Yu that a meeting between a former North Korean agent now living in South Korea and family members of a missing Japanese abductee, who is believed to have taught Japanese to the agent, will soon be realized.

12. "Stimulus Measures Should Be Quickly Implemented" The liberal Asahi editorialized (2/12): "... Economic and financial restoration plans should be swiftly implemented. This will hold the key to whether President Obama will be able to transform people's 'expectations' into 'trust' in him."

13. "U.S. Bailout Plan Disappointing" The business-oriented Nikkei opined in an editorial (2/12): "The financial stabilization plan revealed by Secretary of the Treasury Geithner failed to meet the expectations that the Obama administration will break up the fog over the U.S. financial market by taking bold steps the Bush administration was unable to take. The plan remains ambiguous and lacks boldness."

14. "Concern about Protectionism Remains" The liberal Tokyo Shimbun wrote in an editorial (2/12): "A stimulus package and a bailout plan are being put in place. Although this is progress, 'Buy American' provisions should be reviewed."

15. "Path to Peace Should Not Be Blocked" The liberal Asahi argued in an editorial (2/12): "... The Obama administration, which has shown a proactive posture toward Middle East peace, will be shocked if Israel forms a government led by the right wing. The U.S. called for dialogue with Iran in the judgment that talks with Iran are vital for stability in the region."

The overall strategy for the Middle East could become difficult if relations between Israel and Iran deteriorate."

¶6. "Next Administration Should Respect Middle East Peace" The liberal Mainichi stated in an editorial (2/12): "... Regardless who the next prime minister will be or what kind of a coalition government will be formed, there will be no peace or security for Israel unless it works on Middle East peace."

¶7. "Israel Leaning to the Right Wing is a Challenge for the U.S." The business-oriented Nikkei editorialized (2/12): "... The Obama administration has been energetically working on Middle East peace by appointing a special envoy to the region. However, its diplomacy will face difficulties if the influence of the right wing increases in Israel."

¶8. "U.S. and Iran Should Overcome Antagonism" The conservative Sankei's editorial wrote (2/12): "... If the U.S. and Iran can overcome their 30-year-long antagonism, the move will have a positive impact on the antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East peace talks... The global community is hoping that the U.S. will restore its leadership under the Obama administration."

ZUMWALT